



[Thomas Sankara, 1949-1987](#)

Thomas Sankara

As we said in relation to Huey Newton, the reading of the original words of political leaders is apt to result in a re-evaluation of the received opinions about writers. In the case of Thomas Sankara, the revision is downwards.

Sankara is the legendary President of Burkina Faso, immortalised in the book “[Thomas Sankara Speaks](#)”, of which the attached document is an extract.

The only other document mentioned by Sankara in this speech, made shortly before his death in a coup organised by his comrade [Blaise Compaore](#), is his own [Political Orientation Speech](#) of 2 October 1983, allegedly (according to Wikipedia) written by another comrade, [Valère Somé](#).

Compaore was President of Burkina Faso until 2014, 28 years after the coup that killed Sankara. Valère Somé survived as an oppositionist.

The “Political Orientation Speech” was given soon after the *coup d’état* of 1983 that first brought Sankara and Compaore to power. It is a kind of *ad hoc* statement of good intentions. It quotes no antecedents.

Otherwise the speech of 4 August 1987 (“Revolution is a Perpetual Teacher”) is all generalisation. No other political figures are quoted, no events, no specific projects. It is not like the speech of a president. It is all exhortation.

Every assertion is hedged with a counter-assertion.

At times Sankara indicates that he is about to go into details, but then he does not do so. At times he says we must learn from other revolutions, but he mentions none. Other African countries are not mentioned other than in the salutations at the beginning and the end.

We have all heard such empty speeches. They are called “clap-trap”.

The organisations mentioned are all of the top-down kind.

The peasants, who surely would have comprised a large part of his audience, are insulted from the start.

There is paranoia in this speech. When you read it, you can suspect that Sankara already had fears that were born out when he was couped and murdered on 15 October 1987, less than three months later.

There is no actual politics. It all reduces to appeals to strive for happiness and dignity. The mass agency of which Sankara is proud to boast is overwhelmed by the “persuasion” that the proposed vanguard is meant to exercise.

It is necessary to read all, but this one is a shocking discovery. The great Sankara, with such a romantic image and such a huge following, even today, turns out to be a revolutionary fraud.

The next writer, Walter Rodney, our last, was not a fraud.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Thomas Sankara, Revolution is a perpetual teacher, 1987.](#)
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